

Mission

Volume 19 | Issue 12

Article 1

6-1-1986

Mission: Vol. 19, No. 12

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Recommended Citation

(1986) "Mission: Vol. 19, No. 12," *Mission*: Vol. 19 : Iss. 12 , Article 1.

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JUNE, 1986

MISSION JOURNAL

**THE MOST IMPORTANT HOUR
IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

By Paul Magee and Gary Duke

Dealing With Disappointment

By Gene Hartman

**More on *Guinn vs. The
Collinsville Church of Christ***

Milestones

Milestones are important in the history of nations, states, social and political institutions, churches, families, and individuals. They are exclamation marks that highlight the important events and cause us to look to the past and the future, turning points that enable us to find value in the struggles in between and ultimately to draw the threads to life together into meaningful patterns.

Next month we will celebrate—as we do every year—one of the milestones that shaped the destiny of our country. This year Texas is celebrating its Sesquicentennial, looking back to that moment in history when it became a state but also to all that has transpired since then to make it what it is today.

Recently the congregation of which I am a part celebrated a twenty-fifth anniversary. As people gathered from various parts of the country, the past began to unfold as friends reminisced and testified to the nurturing and strength they had received as a part of that church. In the formal speeches I was able to get a better picture of our identity; and for all of us it was an occasion of reflection and rededication to serving God in our community.

My youngest daughter graduated from college last month, a milestone both for her and for her parents. For her: it was perhaps a greater event than for many graduates because her college career had been fraught with so many setbacks and illnesses. Surely now she can put all that behind and move into her career with confidence. For her parents: now all the children are on their own and even employed—surely a time all parents look forward to and experience as a major milestone, bittersweet though it may be (yes, “sunrise, sunset”).

This month *Mission Journal* completes nineteen years of publication. We will consider the coming year as a milestone to be recognized and celebrated in several ways. We are already in the process of evaluating our history, to see what we have accomplished, where we have failed, whose lives we have touched; of taking stock of ourselves, our dreams and goals, our motives, our dedication not just to publishing a journal but to serving the Lord and shedding a little light on the way for others; and, most importantly, through prayer and reflection, of seeking to understand our challenge and mission for the future.

We would appreciate your thoughtful critique and suggestions for making the journal more responsive to the needs of our readers.

As I contemplate the past, present, and future of *Mission*, I smile at a humorous irony: this editor's husband was one of those who predicted the uselessness and certain failure of such a journal as was proposed nineteen years ago. Surely God does work in mysterious ways.

—The Editor

“TO EXPLORE THOROUGHLY THE SCRIPTURES AND THEIR MEANING . . . TO UNDERSTAND AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE THE WORLD IN WHICH THE CHURCH LIVES AND HAS HER MISSION . . . TO PROVIDE A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNICATING THE MEANING OF GOD'S WORD TO OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD.”

— EDITORIAL POLICY STATEMENT, JULY, 1967

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Mission Journal is published monthly by Mission Journal, Inc., 12102 Tanglebriar Cove, Austin, Texas 78750. Annual, \$12; three years, \$30; annual student and senior citizens, \$7.50. Bundle and bound volume rates on request. Single copies \$1.

Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome. Those submitted for publication should be submitted in duplicate, double spaced, and typed. Maximum length: ten pages.

Editorial Office: 1508 Ephesus Church Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27514. Phone: 919/929-4936.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Mission Journal, 12102 Tanglebriar Cove, Austin, TX 78750, which is also the address to be used for circulation and bookkeeping correspondence.

The Most Important Hour In The Life Of The Church



Paul Magee



Gary Duke

By PAUL MAGEE and GARY DUKE

The Sunday morning assembly is the most important hour in the life of the church. It is the only time when most of the church members are present and ready to give whatever they have to give (money, interest, loyalty, support) and receive much of what they seek (inspiration, a sense of belonging, information, corporate communion with God). It is the time when the church expresses its beliefs and values before God, itself, and a watching world. We are present. We are doing what we say is important. We do it every week. People have a right to assume that these activities reflect something of what we are. The character and quality of the Sunday morning worship hour may, in fact, be a measure of the general health of a church's corporate life.

In view of these realities, it seems only sensible to take this hour and make it as effective as possible in meeting our needs and the needs of those who may come among us. In this article we hope to suggest some practical ways in which this may be done and to examine some philosophical matters which relate to worship.

We must first look carefully at another reality that may be painful to observe: generally Church of Christ worship services are not very appealing. They have little impact upon members or visitors. There are some needs left essentially unsatisfied. Like the naked king unaware, we are fearfully weak in worship.

Neither Catholic with tradition and pageantry to carry the weight, nor Pentecostal with emotion and

involvement, nor Presbyterian with a rational thrust, we are in a no-man's land of mediocrity, trying to sell others and ourselves a "brand X" church service in a plain wrapper with very little appeal. Much of the content is dull, slow-moving, unintentionally offensive, and oblivious to many well known principles of social psychology and group behavior. Much of the time there is a noted lack of the simple but elegant virtue of common courtesy. The impression often made is that we do not take this hour very seriously and that we are not really getting much out of it. Otherwise, why are we dragging in so late, looking so bored, and acting so eager to leave?

We see three elements of worship needing more attention in our fellowship which, if properly addressed, would better meet needs within our own membership and strengthen our appeal to others. These are (1) spiritual—a recognition of the presence of God, (2) intellectual—an appreciation of the beauty of thought, and (3) organizational—effective planning and execution of whatever kind of service may be desired.

THE ELEMENT OF THE SPIRIT

God is at the center of the church and of the worship hour. The corporate worship must center upon the person and will of God. There are other times to do teaching, to communicate plans and news, to have fellowship, and to serve others. The most propitious time for corporate worship is Sunday morning. We have a track record of crowding the spiritual out with many other priorities. We never have had much time in our "auditoriums" for

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worship. At best, we highlight communion or do a little extra singing.

If the time and ideological emphasis is upon preaching, fellowship, and announcements, people leave with the impression that these are indeed the most important things; and they will not often have the feeling that they saw God and drew close to Him. This strikes to the heart of our case, which is the neglect of the absolutely vertical dimension of worship and the failure to afford the worshiper an opportunity to respond in spirit to God. The power and joy of Christian worship come from encountering God, being aware of his presence, and praising Him for his holiness and magnificence.

Getting the vertical element of worship back into the center of the hour will not prohibit horizontal emphasis or effective communication about news or programs. It will restore a balance which places the praise of God at the hour's heart and center. Other activities which occur before, during and after worship will be enhanced in their effectiveness.

Our heritage includes a major emphasis upon doing right things in right ways with the frequent consequence of negating worship through the fear of doing it wrong. As in many of life's concerns, we may try so hard to do it right that we do not do it at all!

There are some fears and blind spots that we must overcome if we are to restore—or perhaps create for the first time in our experience—an emphasis upon the spiritual element of worship. Our heritage includes a major emphasis upon doing right things in right ways with the frequent consequence of negating worship through the fear of doing it wrong. As in many of life's concerns, we may try so hard to do it right that we do not do it at all! This matter of being right is of concern to both conservatives and liberals, although in different ways. It must be addressed with care if we are to create a worship experience that is biblical and meets our needs. One would hope that no conflict exists between these variables.

Another limiting factor is our prejudice toward other religious groups and their practices. Pentecostals and Baptists are noted for joy in their worship. We need that. Catholics have historic symbols and traditions which lend solidarity and strength. We may not need those particular symbols, but we certainly need the strength. Presbyterians and Episcopalians apply intellect and

organization to worship. We can learn from these people. Once we get past prejudices—even while maintaining everyone's integrity regarding differences—we can see real value in altars, stained glass, confessions, and careful preparation for worship. Our religious heritage will allow us to make some adaptive use of these elements and will be nourished by doing so.

Our fear of silence is yet another matter that we must overcome if we are to gain a new power in worship. If a moment of silence occurs in this hour, it is interpreted as an awkward time to be filled as soon as possible with a song. We have not been taught to be quiet, to reflect, to look for God inside ourselves or in the cross or communion. Because we have had few symbols and little architectural beauty to encourage that reflection, we have lived with very little of it. We need a time to come into the "Holy of Holies" and confront God's presence. Silence, reflection, and reverence can be significant ingredients in that experience.

THE ELEMENT OF THE MIND

In a time of great pluralism and egalitarianism, often accompanied by a fear of elitism, it seems appropriate to note that the minds of worshipers may be as bored in a country church as in an urban church. The issue is not one of how intelligent, educated, or sophisticated are the worshipers, but rather of whether the worship content and procedure are appropriately designed to take into account their respective needs and to provide a challenge and reward.

Fundamentalists have historic habits of denying the intellect with Scripture quotations about the "foolishness of preaching" and sermons on the blindness of faith and obedience. We are determined to "keep it simple." We tend to neglect those Scriptures which speak of mystery, life's complexities, or even the more complex aspects of spiritual growth. Our hymn selections are more often the simple ones to the neglect of those which speak to the profundity of God's relation to the world. Romans, the Magna Carta of Christianity and a treatise of the highest intellect and logic, is rarely studied and appreciated.

People live in a complex world. Their work, their personal lives and their faith are complex. To come to church and be told that life is simple and then to be subjected to an experience which denies one's intelligence is to question the validity of the hour. There is a serious loss of power and attractiveness when the role of the mind is neglected in sermon, song, and prayer. Man is the only being with a mind to know God. We are to love God with all our hearts

and souls *and minds*. We may be closest to God when in our minds we grasp his reality and adore his grandeur!

Let us note here that we refer not only to logical, rational thinking processes, but also to the ability of

The character and quality of the Sunday morning worship hour may be a measure of the general health of a church's corporate life.

the mind to perceive beauty and to soar in ecstasy at the wonder of love, grace, and forgiveness. In that respect, we may observe that in churches known for the distinction of their worship, there is an element that is found consistently: the common appreciation of beauty. As different as they are—from the high structure of a formulaic liturgy to the seeming non-structure of a meeting in silence—each has its own kind of elegance.

Elaine Herrin, writing in *Christianity Today*, says, "The language of worship has become dull, prosaic, without fire or life. A return to old language is not the answer; a return to poetry is." The poetry of which she speaks includes all those vessels through which meaning and beauty are communicated. Poets and musicians and artists and prophets and preachers stand together in a creative stream that connects history—a stream from which we have in large measure cut ourselves off. However, since art divorced from life is feeble and poetry without power is disappointing, this beauty must never become an idol and is valid only in so far as it reminds us, as Herrin says, "that we are participants in a mystery to which we adhere by faith."

Perhaps that mystery, indeed the whole message of the Gospel, is best communicated through the gift of music. Music speaks directly to the soul, with words and beyond words. It is the language of the heart and the gateway to a sense of power and strength that is so desperately needed in our worship assemblies. We must examine anew the admonition to "speak to one another in psalms and hymns." Perhaps we can find new resources in music—even in acappella form.

THE ELEMENT OF ORGANIZATION

We may be more brief in this matter than in the discussion of other elements. After all, we intend to say merely that a church should take the time and resources to plan well and execute well an hour which enables people to worship God with their hearts and minds. There is considerable complexity to God, the experience of worship, and the mind.

Organization is not so complex or difficult. But given the level of neglect traditional in our history, we must decide to commit rather vastly increased time and resources to this task.

First, let us do *good planning*. We must move away from the tendency to use the default mode of last-minute or one person decisions on worship structure and content. Let us find some people in the church who have skills and experience in planning meetings and organizing behavior. There are effective logistical procedures and sound social psychological approaches which enable a service to proceed with minimum disruption and distraction and maximum attention to the essence of the occasion. These principles operate across a continuum for Pentecostal to Presbyterian, and they will work for us. For example, people are more involved when they stand, but there is an art in determining when and how frequently to stand and the creation of unobtrusive means of giving instructions. Opening and closing every service with a standing song offers structure, continuity, and a sense of participation. It also masks some inevitable movement of people. Instructions can be simplified through tradition or good print forms. There is no need for worshipers even to know that this is well planned. It is not manipulative and will enhance, not limit, their worship experience.

We may be closest to God when in our minds we grasp his reality and adore his grandeur!

Second, let us have *good content*. Find some more people who have a sense of what these worshipers seek and need, who have the maturity of thought and experience to rise above their individual and thus limited perceptions to what is beneficial for the whole. We might suggest an avoidance of both highly individualistic content which can be embarrassing or offensive and rigidly structured forms which may become boring or limiting. We need better "stuff"—something equal to the proven, historic, classic material of Christian worshipers through the centuries. People have given lifetimes and centuries to planning and developing liturgy: prayers, readings, movements, atmosphere, poetry. Let us be realistic and appropriately modest as we try to improve on this. We need new and relevant content. But it has to be very good.

Finally, we wish to say that worship is not the only vital element in this most important hour of the life of the church. We have limited our observations to it because it seems to be the most essential as well as the most neglected. *An atmosphere of friendliness,*

acceptance, warmth, and service is critical to this hour. Other items include properly furnished and maintained facilities, excellent sound systems, well designed and written print material, and every other element which enhances the beauty and joy of the hour.

The people and churches of our religious heritage have beautiful and valuable qualities for which there is urgent need in the world. In our own midst there are many who are seeking a more meaningful life. This important hour can make a critical difference in individual and corporate lives. It deserves our best efforts.

Our closing challenge may perhaps best be stated thusly: symbols are Catholic, emotion is Pentecostal, rationality is Presbyterian, quiet is Quaker, meditation is Eastern. What are we and how much of these can we claim for our experience in worship? What is the unique contribution that we have made to Christian worship?

SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

I am not a machine.

My life's most momentous decisions
are not a mere weighing of the facts.
My most potent life experiences
are not straightforward, objective occurrences.

I worship a dynamic God,
one of passion and energy.
Yet, much of the time
church for me is stale and procedural.

I visit other churches
and I feel alive.
My senses and my soul respond
to the drama and color and richness of texture.
I go to the church of my childhood
and I'm met with predictable blandness.
We have rejected Joseph's rainbow robe,
settled for and even demanded a
somber cloak of black.

MISSION

THE BATTLE

At the center of the universe lies a vacant, dimly lit room. Its inner walls are barren, devoid of decoration except for a small sign above a solitary door which reads, "SUMMIT OR MAKE WAR."

A man pauses anxiously outside the door, then tentatively steps inside. The door slams harshly and irrevocably behind him, echoing deafening thunder throughout the tiny room.

In one corner of the room stands Satan, arms folded, waiting confidently. A twisted sneer circles his mouth, betraying malicious hate. In the opposite corner of the room lies a radiant silver case housing a sharp, double-edged sword. On one side of the rapier are the words "THE ALMIGHTY SWORD OF THE SPIRIT." On the other, "THE EVERLASTING WORD OF GOD."

The man lifts the sword from the case uncertainly, now cursing himself for never having learned its proper use. "One hand or two?" he wonders feverishly as Satan stealthily begins his approach. "To jab or to swing?" he cries silently as he begins to circle the room.

Quickly, impulsively, the man makes a wild, backhanded swing, throwing himself off balance and leaving himself undefended. Satan stabs him viciously in the back and retreats tauntingly. The man stumbles in pain, then regains his balance and circles again. He raises the sword over his head clumsily, and Satan slashes a gaping wound near the man's heart. Falling to his knees, the man makes one final, faltering sweep of the blade toward Satan. He strikes Satan impotently with the broad part of the blade, leaving hardly a bruise upon his heel.

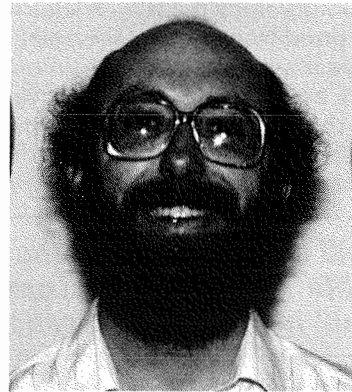
The man lies crumpled to the ground in a dying heap, completely vulnerable. In one fluid motion Satan hurls him through the door, leaving him battered, bleeding, and defeated.

In the corner of a vacant, dimly lit room at the center of the universe lies an all-powerful, double-edged sword. It waits patiently for one skilled in its use.

— KEN CAMERON

Ken Cameron is a clinical psychologist at the Ozark Guidance Center in Springdale, Arkansas.

Seeing With The Eyes Of An Eagle: Dealing With Disappointment



If we set our hope ultimately on the accomplishment of God's will in our own personal lives, in the lives of others, and in the universe as a whole, the disappointment of daily set-backs will give way to a deep joy and peace.

By GENE HARTMAN

The feeling is the same even though the people and the situations may vary greatly. When we invest our time, energy, and hope into an expected outcome which is not realized, we experience disappointment. It hurts. Imagine a high school boy being turned down the first time he musters enough courage to ask out a pretty girl, or a young couple awaiting news from an adoption agency who receive this notification: "No babies available at this time." We all know the pain of "hope gone awry," and it's often defeating; but it doesn't have to be.

Several years ago I went through the worst disappointment I had experienced up to that time in my life. For the second year in a row I was turned down for a graduate internship. Because I had envisioned my whole future with this as the point of origin, I felt, when I received the news, as if my career plans were completely thwarted. What would I do *now*? What *could* I do now? How *could* God let such a thing happen to me? In seeking answers to these questions I made some comforting observations, and my outlook changed from fearful hopelessness to confident hopefulness.

The First Step Toward Hope

Perspective was the major factor in coming to grips with my disappointment. I had begun with a very narrow viewpoint: "How does this affect *me*?" This is probably the first question for all of us, but consider the implications if it is followed to its logical

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conclusion. My hope and expectations were thwarted; what I wanted I was not going to receive. Everything revolved around *me*. Such an attitude makes it impossible to feel anything but bitter pain. We experience disappointment in the first place because our eyes focus primarily on the personal consequences.

With the passing of time, I began to see a somewhat broader scope: this situation which had affected *me* did not involve *only me*. In fact, everything that happens to *us* rarely affects *only us*. My failure to receive the position I wanted so badly meant that someone else had received it. He or she was surely as much affected by the situation as I was. Perhaps there were others who had applied and not been chosen—their lives were also touched.

At this point I let my imagination run wild: what about the people I would have been working with but now am not; or those I have come to know since but never would have met if I had been selected; and beyond that, the many who would be influenced indirectly two or three times removed from me? The ripples created in the pool of my life and in the lives of others may even be felt many years from now. It may sound rather far-fetched, like a mind game—"If I turn right at the corner instead of left, the course of all history will be changed forever." But the point is that the "just me" perspective is not adequate or helpful when we are trying to deal with disappointment in our lives.

Besides the rippling pool, another water picture helps in broadening our perspective. We can think of our lives as a river and the individual incidents as

stopping points along the way. A squirrel might see it as a quiet pond from his vantage point; farther along it may appear as raging rapids to an onlooking deer. Both spots are undeniably parts of the same river, although the squirrel and deer would give very different descriptions. However, the eagle, soaring high above ground level, sees the river from start to

God's will looks far beyond the particulars in my life to a glorious consummation which will involve all of creation.

finish. He understands the interrelations of the twists and turns, the whitewater and the calm. He sees tributaries joining and adding to the river, small streams branching off and taking away from it. For the eagle, the river is ever changing, not static; a flowing process, not a stagnant product.

As we become able to look at the broader picture, our focus widens to include more than just ourselves. When we can see that many other persons are also involved, the disappointment we feel for our own loss becomes less intense. Not only is this new vision comforting, it is also more accurate.

Seeking God's Will

At the time of my lost job opportunity there was another factor which kept the dial turned up on my disappointment meter: the quest to find God's will. Just what was God's will in this situation anyway? Did He want to teach me some particular lesson? Was He closing one door in order to open another for me? Where should I look for this open door?

If you analyze the motives behind these questions, however (and I did not, at least initially), you can see I was not really centering on God's will, but still on myself. I was interested in God's will only insofar as it affected me. But as more time passed and I became more honest with myself, I could see that God's will encompasses much more than my not getting a particular job at a particular time.

In developing this new attitude, the most important insight came through reexamining the prayer Jesus taught his disciples. The first thing Jesus taught them to pray was "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Therefore, one of our most urgent desires, if not *the* most urgent, should be that God's will be accomplished. Certainly we should want God's will before our own (Matt. 26:39). We must also recognize that his will involves all of earth and all of heaven—an all-encompassing will from Him who created all things. It seems, then, only reasonable to conclude that God's will involves more than "just me" in my disappointment of the moment.

The most universal statement in the Bible about the will of God can be found in Ephesians 1:9-10:

For He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will, according to the purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.

That all-encompassing will which Jesus referred to in the "Lord's Prayer" seems to be equated here with God's unifying of all things under his lordship. In his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul explained it this way: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father" (Phil. 2:10-11).

Talk about changing one's perspective! After contemplating these Scriptures, I had to acknowledge that God had a goal which far overshadowed my momentary disappointment. His will looks far beyond the particulars in my life to a glorious consummation which will involve all of creation. No wonder Paul was able to say, "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Glimpsing this great purpose helped to soothe the disappointment I had felt.

In terms of the image I used earlier, I suppose I could say that the eagle flew a second time, even higher, enabling him to see the river flow ultimately into an ocean. And not only his river, but hundreds and thousands of others cut their way into the ocean as well. So while they enjoyed an individual existence for a time, their ultimate course led them all to being united in the much greater expanse of the ocean. Only as the eagle flew very high was he able to see his river in such a relation to the whole network of bodies of water.

From The Universal To The Particular

Seeing with the eyes of the eagle enabled me to see my disappointment in a larger context, but it also seemed to diminish me as a person. It became very easy to feel insignificant in the grand scheme of God's will. Rather than my disappointments being seen as major catastrophes, now it seemed that they were trivial except as instruments in bringing about God's purpose. As an individual I would mean nothing. If these were my choices, I preferred disappointment.

However the Bible does not teach that we and our individual lives are insignificant. While guiding the whole of history and creation, God's will also touches the particulars—and with the highest regard. Two further statements from Ephesians

illustrate how the will of God is concerned for us as individuals:

He destined us in love to be His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (1:6-7)

In Him, according to the purpose of Him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of His glory. (1:11-12)

As individuals we are significant to God; we are not merely instruments in the fulfillment of his plan. His will becomes intensely individual and personal at the level of our salvation. If we ever doubt that, we need only to reflect on God's love as expressed in the death of Jesus Christ. Not only this, but God also cares that we grow to Christian maturity. Following the broad assertion in Romans 8:28 that "in everything God works for good," Paul shows the narrower scope of God's will in his desire for Christians to grow: "For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the first-born among many brethren" (8:29). The will of God, as it applies to me personally, is that I be saved and grow to become like Jesus. This applies to all of us as individuals, not "just me." Therefore, we can view the individual situations of our lives as opportunities for God to "grow us up."

What the eagle missed on his second flight was the individual beauty of each river as it flowed into the ocean. They were much more than mere tributaries to the final outcome. On a closer examination the

eagle began to appreciate that each river was cutting its own unique course through widely different terrain. Some rivers ran more swiftly than others. Some were short, some were long; some wide, some narrow. A few of the rivers flowed straight and strong into the ocean, whereas others were dotted with rapids and waterfalls along their course. What the eagle finally understood was that the whole network was inseparably connected. It was not all ocean, nor was it all river; and in this understanding the eagle captured the true beauty of his own river.

Keeping pace with my eagle, I finally realized that even my disappointment came under the umbrella of God's will—not only in establishing his lordship over all creation but also in nurturing my own Christian maturity. Therefore, to suffer disappointment that God's will might be accomplished was actually a special privilege: God has made me his partner. I did not know then, and still do not know, all of the ramifications involved in my not getting that job. But I do trust that in them God is drawing all things nearer to the culmination of his Master Plan.

This leads to a new attitude toward our experiences of disappointment. It does not mean that the pain of "hope gone awry" will vanish; but with the acute vision of an eagle we may be able to understand it better—perhaps even see something beautiful in it. Furthermore, if we set our hope ultimately on the accomplishment of God's will in our own personal lives, in the lives of others, and in the universe as a whole, the disappointment of daily set-backs will give way to a deep joy and peace. This is the hope of which Paul speaks in Romans 5:5:

And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given us.

MISSION

Have You Made Your Reservation?

The Richardson East Church of Christ in Richardson, Texas, is hosting our Annual Readers Seminar on June 21 at 12:00 noon. Reservations for the luncheon/seminar may be made by calling Larry James at (214) 231-8231. Cost is \$5.00 per person. The speaker will be Harold Straughn, author of *The Five Divorces of a Healthy Marriage*.

A Word For Our Times

**a column for
opinion and
personal
reflection**

A Small Book In A White Box: Memories

By Karen Sampson

Within two weeks of our wedding day David and I loaded up a creaky U-Haul truck and moved from Tennessee to Louisiana. David was to be the minister of a small congregation just north of New Orleans. The days quickly settled into a routine: David driving proudly off to work leaving me to unpack and organize our first home.

Late one afternoon as I was unpacking a carton of David's belongings, I came across a small flat white box. I had never seen it before and decided it must have come from David's home in Indiana, where we had picked up some things after our honeymoon. I sat down on the carpet in the study and opened the box. Inside was a small book. I opened the cover and realized with a small thrill of delight that it was David's baby book.

As I leafed slowly through the pages, I read all the small wonders and triumphs that had been recorded. David's mother had written about everything: the first shots, the first teeth, the first words, the first steps. All was chronicled in loving detail, page after page of everyday memories. She continued to write past David's first birthday, recording all the toddler stories. I giggled, enjoying this unexpected peek into my husband's past. Then there was his second birthday: the party, the cake, the presents, the cousins who came.

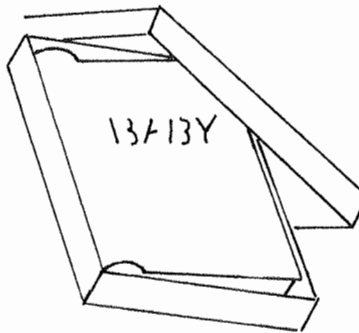
But somewhere past the second birthday, somewhere past the third Christmas, the entries began to thin out. Before the third birthday party they stopped altogether. I thought back to the day, when we were dating, that I asked David to tell me about his family. "My dad's a farmer and a mail carrier," he had said. "My mother died of cancer when I was three. I don't remember much about her except her being sick."

It has been nearly thirty years since David's mother opened that baby

book for the first time. Time pressures and stress are the watchwords of today. Life's pace has quickened and families have hurried and harried themselves to near exhaustion. The baby book is being replaced by the baby calendar with stickers to quickly mark the date of baby milestones.

What kind of everyday memories will our families have? Dad and Mom comatose in front of the television night after night? Or so caught up in projects for work or projects for volunteer groups that time pressures squeeze them into a bundle of bad-tempered nerves?

Traditions and memories are the roots of our family systems. Normally



we connect these special family memories with holidays and the traditions that surround them, but memories are made everyday in the give and take of life together.

One of my earliest memories is of a conspiracy that my sisters and I shared with our dad. One night a week my mom would drive off to the local college to take a night course, leaving us in our father's care to be fed, bathed, and put to bed. The feeding and bathing were accomplished with dispatch. Then when we were supposed to be put to bed, Dad let us sit up with him and watch his favorite television show, "Combat." When

Mom pulled into the driveway, we would fly to our bedrooms and pretend to be asleep. The show was okay, but the conspiracy with Dad was the fun part!

A little creative thinking and a commitment to spend time together is all that is needed to make special memories. The benefits to be gained are incalculable. A major plus is increased self-esteem for our children and spouses. Spending time together—whether having a picnic on the back porch, reading a special bedtime story, or playing a quiet game of backgammon—sends the message, "You are special; I like to be with you." Life in our modern world seems cruelly calculated to chip away at our feelings of self-worth. We need to be aware of this and make our families places where everyone is affirmed as a worthwhile person.

Family identity has taken a beating in today's hectic and mobile society. Most people live far from their extended families, making it hard for children to understand their family structures and values. Few children now know the pleasure of sitting and listening to a favorite uncle or grandparent tell stories of the family's past, the funny, exciting, or sad escapades that make up their heritage.

Recently, in a Wednesday night Bible class, the teens I teach were assigned to conduct a "family history" scavenger hunt. They were to spend two weeks digging into their family past for facts and memorabilia. When the night came to share, we had a wonderful time laughing about moms' and dads' baby pictures, parents' early boy friends, and old hairstyles and clothes. We examined family trees, pictures of great-great-grandparents, and war time medals. The teenagers seemed to enjoy delving into their history and were excited about sharing their finds.

Memories, the roots of our family

systems, grow into traditions that help us to know who we are and where we stand in the community and the world.

Time set aside to make a special dinner, write a note of encouragement, or leaf through a family album together is never wasted. But don't just wait for it to happen spontaneously. Make it happen—now! For "when I have more time" almost never comes. Give conscious thought to the creation of

memorable times in your family. If you need some ideas, invest in the book *Making Family Memories* by Shirley Dobson and Gloria Gaither. They have collected enough creative and inexpensive ideas to get anyone started immediately.

I put the baby book back into the little white box. My eyes filled and tears splashed down onto the little book of memories as I put it gently into

a drawer. Why? Nothing earth-shattering was recorded there. It's not unusual for a baby to say "Mama" for the first time. It's not front-page news when a little boy gets his first haircut. But these everyday memories, quietly recorded by a proud and loving mother, have become a special part of her grown-up boy's self-esteem. And someday they will be a legacy to share with our children.

Space Shuttle America

By Ben B. Boothe

But I wonder, if science has turned into a monster whose final triumph will be man's own destruction.

Thomas A. Edison late in his career

Like the members of the ill-fated space shuttle crew, our society has become convinced of the omniscience and omnipotence of technology. Technocrats speak in languages unknown to the masses and deal in the interconnections so complex—and yet so pervasive—that in the event of disaster most individuals would not even know the questions to ask, much less have the ability to find solutions. Certainly the majority of people would not know how to protect themselves.

Also like the members of the Challenger's crew, we have allowed a scientific community to empower some persons with the potential to destroy us all. We can't even get off the ship—planet Earth. We are strapped in, roaring through time and space to the inevitable. About the only

power we may have left is to speak.

On the brink of a nuclear holocaust is our only voice going to be "Roger. . . full throttle"? Will some of us at least speak now to slow it down to give us time to analyze and find a way out of this accelerating madness? Or will the age of reason, the age of science, end in a blaze of glory and blow us into the



twentieth century dark ages?

If our worship of science and technology doesn't destroy us, surely it will lead to eventual despair. Hence I would call for continued progress—progress in putting priorities in a balanced perspective. The technocrats must step back a little; review and resume our study of the humanities, the liberal arts; reaffirm the traditional values of human relationships; and learn again that happiness is not to be found in technology and gadgetry to the exclusion of humanness. Indeed the quiet life, or the simple moments of respite from all the monsters we have created, or the ability to say with meaning to one another, "I love you," may again become as sacred as our science has been.

Perhaps a renewed application for the basic values of God and humanity could be our salvation in more ways than one!

Sister Ethylwyn

By John Whitfield

An Anglican nun, Ethylwyn Wenham spent more than forty years serving the poor and sick as a member of the Sisters of St. John the Divine. At age seventy-six she has quit—the order that is, not her commitment to poverty, chastity and obedience. Disgruntled that the monastic rules governing silence, prayer, habit, and fasting weren't being strictly enforced, she complained, "Everything has become optional and you can't run a community with everybody doing what they [sic] like." So she has formed a breakaway group that strictly adheres

to the rules.

Relaxing the rules is a badge of our society. We smile at the likes of Sister Ethelwyn: austere, straitlaced, uncompromising, rather unreal. On the other hand, the logical conclusion of

not taking a stand is, as she rightly observes, everybody doing his or her own thing.

Finding a place to stand and standing there is challenge both for each Christian and for the Church.

Speakers of A Word for June: Karen Sampson is a social worker for Christ's Haven for Children and the director of the counseling ministry at the Park Row Church of Christ, Arlington, Texas. Ben B. Boothe is President of the Western National Bank of Texas in Fort Worth and a Mission Trustee. John Whitfield teaches in the Department of Mathematical Sciences at Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: Building Bridges of Understanding



Designed to assist churches in coming to a greater vision of Christian unity, the B.E.M. document can stimulate fuller appreciation of the worldwide fellowship of Christian people, a fellowship which interfaces with such issues as race, nationality, and denominational tradition.

By R. SCOTT COLGLAZIER

Fragmented and splintered, our world is plagued by nations, families, marriages, and churches which fail to communicate meaningfully with one another. A terrorist group hijacks a TWA airliner, making demands that seem strange and incomprehensible for nearly all of the western world. A husband packs his last box of clothes, says good-bye to a lost love, and kisses a confused child; heading into a new phase of life he wonders what happened and at what point the marriage turned sour. A member of the Church of Christ looks at a Methodist business partner; exasperated over a two-hour luncheon discussion on baptism, he is nonplussed over how two people reading the same Bible can arrive at such different positions. In spite of the fact that we live in an age of ubiquitous communication, there nevertheless exists surprisingly little dialogue and understanding among human beings. Therefore, any forum which fosters better communication among human beings is to be appreciated, applauded and utilized.

In 1982 the most important ecumenical document of this century was drafted by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. This document is the culmination of nearly fifty years of study, discussion, and Christian sharing. Designed to assist churches in coming to a greater vision of Christian unity, this work can stimulate fuller appreciation of the worldwide fellowship of Christian people, a

fellowship which interfaces with such issues as race, nationality, and denominational tradition. Naturally, if there is to be a visible witness to Christian unity, there must be significant discussion and appreciation of the gifts which God has granted to the Church. There are no gifts which the Church should cherish more than baptism, eucharist (communion), and ministry. The document which explores the rich diversity of these gifts as well as accentuating the broadest levels of common theological understanding is the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* document, which was adopted in an extraordinary ecumenical gathering in Lima, Peru.

The *B.E.M.* document is a marvelously crafted, theologically responsible, intellectually stimulating piece of writing which deserves reading and discussion among members of the Church of Christ. Ideas come of age. For many members of the Church of Christ the fundamentalist isolationism is no longer ringing true. A new generation of Church of Christ members are seeking a way to claim their faith tradition which is rooted in the Stone-Campbell movement and at the same time to move beyond the fearful hostility and polarization which has characterized relationships with other church traditions.

What is so compelling about the *B.E.M.* document is that it functions as a key to open the locks on doors long closed because of religious insecurity or theological wrong-headedness. I would encourage a serious reading of this document because it can create dialogue with Christians of other traditions, and it will enhance one's understanding of the

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biblical and theological complexity of such faith issues as baptism, eucharist, and ministry. The document also provides what I think is an equally valuable service to Christians, namely, the realization that theological inquiry done in an ecumenical context has an integrity all its own and provides, in many cases, a more authentic theological voice to the Church than does systematic theology or biblical study which has proceeded mainly through the halls of academia. In other words, the document attests to an often overlooked reality: theology is not simply concerned with what we know but how we know and even where our knowledge is processed.

I would like to draw attention to various highlights in all three sections of *B.E.M.*, not that these are more important statements than others, but in order to reflect the provocative and sensitive tenor of the writings. The very best way to read the document is with a study group seeking to broaden their theological perspectives.

In the "baptism" section of the *B.E.M.* document there is a striking passage that reflects the kind of stimulating insight that pervades the entire document:

Both the baptism of believers and the baptism of infants take place in the Church as the community of faith In both cases, the baptized person will grow in the understanding of faith. For those baptized upon their own confession of faith, there is always the constant requirement of a continuing growth of personal response in faith. In the case of infants, personal confession is expected later, and Christian nurture is directed to the eliciting of this confession. (p. 4)

There is perhaps no other subject among members of the Church of Christ which is more sacrosanct than baptism (adult immersion in water/for the forgiveness of sins). Interestingly enough, the *B.E.M.* document does state that "baptism upon personal profession of faith is the most clearly attested pattern in the New Testament documents" (p. 4). However, for most in the Church of Christ, adult immersion for the forgiveness of sins is the only true baptism and any alternative understanding is usually treated as a heresy. This particular message from *B.E.M.* presses one to see the great similarity between adult and infant baptism. Both types of baptism are authentically celebrated only within the context of the Christian community. Both practices require confession of faith—adult baptism by the recipient, infant baptism by the parents followed by the recipient in later years. Both baptismal practices assume that there

will be faithful growth for either the adult or the infant. Finally, both infant and adult baptisms operate on the assumption that the efficacy of baptismal waters is dependent upon the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, the Christ who Himself was baptized as an adult, but who also said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me."

What is exciting to me is not whether or not one agrees with the above statements. Initially, agreement is not what is at stake. What is at stake is that such a statement has the ability to stir thought, create discussion, open up communication, and lead one, even if it is a small step, toward the ecumenical vision of the Church. The polarization which has existed between churches over the gift of baptism is tragedy. The diverse practices of baptism bear witness together to the one baptism of the Church, each respective baptismal position being a dimension of a full understanding of this very meaningful experience. The issue is not which is right—adult or infant baptism, sprinkling or immersion. The most significant question which *B.E.M.* can cause one to ask is, what part of the total truth does a respective baptismal position illuminate? In the case of adult believers' baptism, the truth of personal confession is accentuated. For churches practicing infant baptism, the truth of the importance of children in the community of faith and the stewardship of Christian parenting become central. Both positions, practiced and taught across the broad spectrum of the ecumenical church, provide a balanced appreciation of God's watery gift to the Church.

The greatest strength of the "eucharist" section of *B.E.M.* is the comprehensive way in which the Lord's Supper is presented, i.e., as a meal of thanksgiving. "The eucharist signifies what the world is to become: an offering and hymn of praise to the Creator, a universal communion in the body of Christ, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace in the Holy Spirit" (p. 11). The eucharist is also viewed as *anamnesis* or as a memorial of Christ. As the Church gathers to remember Christ through the breaking of bread and drinking of wine, there takes place both representation and anticipation. What Christ has done is represented through the creative power of symbols; what Christ will do is anticipated through hope of the parousia.

Additionally, the eucharist is presented as invocation of the Holy Spirit. "The spirit makes the crucified and risen Christ really present to us in the eucharistic meal, fulfilling the promise contained in the words of institution" (p. 13). There is a mysterious working of God's Spirit in the eucharist; communion is not a strictly rational exercise of pinching bread and then trying to think up crucifix-

ion scenes based on some Easter film one saw years ago. The presence of God's Spirit makes the eucharist a celebration of Christ's presence in the life of the Church.

The eucharist is also viewed as the communion of the faithful. The ultimate moment of the Church's sharing is visibly culminated in the communion service. To share bread and wine means to share life; barriers of race, wealth, education, and theological position tumble down as Christians gather to eat and drink together. The eucharist then is rightly understood as an experience of spiritual solidarity.

Finally, the eucharist is presented as a meal of God's Kingdom. "As it is entirely the gift of God, the eucharist brings into the present age a new reality which transforms Christians into the image of Christ and therefore makes them his effective witnesses" (*B.E.M.*, p. 15). The eucharist becomes a visible experience of God's rule in the world now as well as anticipation of a fuller expression of the Kingdom at a later time. The celebration of the communion is a sign of God's ruling activity.

One can see, then, that the *B.E.M.* document goes to great lengths to offer a multicolored portrait of the eucharist. The Lord's Supper is thanksgiving, memorial, invocation, communion, and meal of the Kingdom. The richness and complexity of this presentation could significantly influence a church that would be willing to establish a *B.E.M.* study group. Furthermore, such a study group might engage in ecumenical discussion and sharing on the basis of what the eucharist means and not simply petty bickering over the frequency of the communion service. For those living in a Church of Christ

tradition and celebrating the eucharist every Sunday, this document has the potential of illuminating the many dimensions of this marvelous gift of bread and wine.

The final section of *B.E.M.* is an exploration of the meaning and function of ministry. Much of this section will be less applicable to members of the Church of Christ than the previous two sections. I would nevertheless encourage a reading and studying of this section. The first part of it is a stirring call for the Church to be the Church, a ministering, proclaiming, witnessing, liberating community. Every Christian has a place in this ministry, each taking his or her place in a broken world, carrying in one's respective broken vessel the treasure of the Gospel.

I want to conclude this brief introduction of *B.E.M.* by sharing my personal experience with this document. I was chairperson of a local ecumenical ministerial group last year. I had the privilege of leading several discussions with this group of ministers—four Methodists, one Baptist, one Pentecostal, one Lutheran. Communication was always lively and enlightening and our theological exploration always proceeded within the context of Christian love and respect. It was particularly satisfying to witness the building of bridges from the inquiry stimulated by the *B.E.M.* I encourage you to purchase this document. Secure a study guide. Begin your own journey into the ecumenical vision which God has for all God's people. It is only when Christians begin experiencing meaningful and visible unity created by dialogue, sharing, and understanding that we can hope for the healing of our fragmented and splintered world. _____ **MISSION**

FORUM



Ron Highfield wishes to take "The Fall" seriously in assessing "The Ethnics of Church Politics" [March, 1986]. Pat Ball in response to Highfield confesses that he is troubled by "the preponderance of emphasis on The Fall." I think Ball's instincts are correct.

"The Fall" is not a term to be found in any of the sixty-six books of The Protestant Bible. Paul argued that sin came into the world through one man (= Adam), and thus the originally immortal man became mortal (Rom. 5:12). But Paul did not argue that Adam's disobedience led to a defect in our ability to reason, as Highfield

would allege.

It was after Paul that patristic writers, especially Augustine of Hippo, developed a systematic doctrine of The Fall, so that Augustine could argue against Pelagius that fallen man could not even will the Good. Highfield has interpreted the Bible in terms of this later Fall-Theology.

But Highfield's position is more helpful than John Mark Hicks who asserts that "The norm is unambiguously revealed in Scripture." Such an assertion is, to say the least, overstated—and like Highfield's position, the product of a later, post-Biblical ideology. Hicks states, "I assume the perspicuity of Scripture." That statement belongs to Martin Luther, but the author of Second Peter, referring to Paul's letters, says, "There are some things in them hard to understand" (2 Pet. 3:16).

I offer one example which involves a

"norm." Paul exhorts in 1 Cor. 6:18, "Shun *porneia*." But what is *porneia*? In classical Greek *porneia* meant "prostitution." But the King James Version translates it "fornication." *Fornicatio* originally meant prostitution, but the English word "fornication" has a more general meaning of any sexual activity outside of marriage. The revised Standard Version translates *porneia* as "immorality," a vague word at best. So what is the norm? The fact is that scholars are not in agreement as to what *porneia* meant when Paul used it, so it is up-for-grabs as to what Paul means when he says, "Shun *porneia*." Thus Hicks' general assertion that "Scripture is unambiguous" is indefensible. There are still many things "hard to understand," as the author of Second Peter observed long ago.

Roy Bowen Ward
Oxford, Ohio

Constitutional Issues In The Appeal Of The Collinsville Church Of Christ

Part I: The Facts Of The Case

By FLAVIL R. YEAKLEY, JR.

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America sets forth some of the most important protections of citizens of this nation: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Several of these important constitutional protections will be seriously weakened if the decision is not reversed in the recent case of *Guinn vs. the Collinsville Church of Christ*.

Previous comments by various writers in *Mission* have generally been critical of the actions taken by the elders of the Church of Christ in Collinsville, Oklahoma, that led up to this case. These previous comments in *Mission*, however, have not presented a full account of the facts, nor have they explained the legal arguments that the Collinsville Church of Christ is using in its appeal. The purpose of this article is to provide readers of *Mission* with this information.

The Member Who Sued The Church

When Marian Guinn first came into contact with the elders of the Collinsville Church of Christ, she was a recently divorced mother with four children—an unemployed high school drop-out living on welfare. Her sister, a member of the Collinsville Church of Christ, told the elders of the congregation about Marian's situation. They offered to help. Members of the church moved Marian and her children to Collinsville, provided food and clothing for her and her four children, helped her get through school, bought her two cars, and paid her bills.¹ One of the elders taught Marian and baptized her.²

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For some time Marian was a faithful member of the Collinsville Church of Christ. During this period, as she later admitted in the trial, she was taught that members of the church have an obligation to admonish a member who sins and urge repentance; she learned that the conduct of a member bears on the reputation and influence of the church in the community; she knew that fornication could harm the reputation of the church; and she learned both by teaching and example that the fellowship of the church is withdrawn from those who sin and refuse to repent.³ She had witnessed a withdrawal of fellowship from a member whose sin, as she later admitted in the trial, would not damage the influence and reputation of the church as much as the sin of fornication.⁴ She knew that the Collinsville Church of Christ, based on its understanding of the Bible, required its members to abstain from all forms of sexual immorality; and she understood that to include any sexual intercourse between people not lawfully married to each other.

The Events

While Marian Guinn was a member of the Collinsville Church of Christ, rumors began to spread through the small town that she was having an affair with Pat Sharp, the owner of the Collinsville drug store and the town's former mayor. During a good portion of 1980 and 1981 Pat Sharp's car was often seen at Marian Guinn's house. Marian was often seen visiting Pat Sharp at his drug store. During the trial Marian admitted that the affair was rumored around town.⁵

Pat Sharp had divorced his wife in August of 1979. One of the rumors in Collinsville was that Marian Guinn had broken up the Sharps' marriage. Pat Sharp's former wife accused Marian of being the cause of the divorce. She testified that she overheard on an extension telephone a conversation in which Pat and Marian said that they loved each other—and

this was before the divorce.⁶

In 1980 the Collinsville City Clerk, who was a member of the Church of Christ, called one of the elders and reported the rumor. The elders decided that they needed to talk to Marian privately about the charges. When they went to her house, they found that she had gone to a laundromat. When they found her at the laundromat, they asked her to leave the younger children in the care of her teenagers so that she could go with them to the church office to discuss some things in private.⁷ *In the trial Marian admitted that every time the elders visited her, they treated her with kindness.*⁸ In this meeting at the church office the elders told Marian about the rumors. She denied that they were true. The elders accepted her denial, but suggested that under the circumstances it would be better for her to stop seeing Pat Sharp. As it turned out, however, she did not.

In the late summer of 1981 Pat Sharp and Marian Guinn had a fight and broke up. Pat started dating someone else over the objections of Marian. Pat then called one of the elders of the Collinsville Church of Christ asking him to keep Marian from bothering him and his new girlfriend. In that conversation, Pat Sharp admitted that he and Marian had frequently engaged in sexual intercourse before their relationship turned sour.⁹

The next morning the elders met privately with Marian and told her what Pat Sharp had said. Faced with this evidence, she admitted that she had been guilty of fornication. She said, however, that she was going to come back to church and not see Pat Sharp again. The elders told her that if they saw her with Pat Sharp again, they would have to assume that the relationship was continuing.¹⁰ Shortly after this meeting, however, Pat and Marian started seeing each other again.

On 16 September 1981 one of Marian's children was attending the Wednesday evening services at the Collinsville Church of Christ. When asked where his mother was, the child said that Pat Sharp had taken her to Tulsa. When the elders learned about this, they went to see Marian a third time. They told her that her sin had become so much a matter of public knowledge that it had hurt the influence and reputation of the church. They said that such a sin against the church as a whole demanded a public confession. They told her that if she did not repent, confess her sins, and ask for the prayers of the congregation, they would have to tell the members to withdraw their fellowship from her. Marian told the elders to leave and they left.¹¹

On 21 September 1981 the elders wrote a letter to Marian again urging her to repent. In this letter they told her that if she did not repent by the following

Sunday, the fellowship of the congregation would be withdrawn from her.

On 24 September 1981 Marian took that letter to a lawyer. On his advice she wrote a letter on 25 September 1981, resigning her membership in the Collinsville Church of Christ and telling the elders not to say anything about her. That letter was sent just two days prior to the time when she was to be disfellowshipped.

After considering the matter, the elders decided that Marian's resignation did not change what they had to do. Those elders share with most other members of the Church of Christ the belief that 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 requires Christians to withdraw their fellowship from a Christian who is guilty of sexual immorality and refuses to repent. This passage is generally understood in Churches of Christ to make a clear distinction between a Christian and a non-Christian fornicator. Paul says that Christians are not to withdraw their fellowship from non-Christian fornicators, since that would require "going out of the world"; but Christians must withdraw their fellowship from any Christian fornicator who refuses to repent. In the view of these

What was withdrawn was not the fellowship at church services because Marian had stopped attending and had resigned her membership in the congregation. What was withdrawn was personal and social contact.

elders Marian Guinn did not cease being a Christian when she resigned her membership in the Collinsville Church of Christ. They regarded her as being in error, but they still regarded her as being a sister in the family of God. Thus they believed that 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, Matthew 18:15-17, and other passages required them to instruct the members of their congregation to have no further association with Marian Guinn because of her refusal to repent of the sin of fornication.

In spite of Marian Guinn's resignation from the Collinsville Church of Christ, the elders went ahead with their message to the congregation instructing the members to have no further association with Marian. In this Sunday morning message the elders identified the Bible passages violated and those that required the members to withdraw their fellowship from Marian Guinn. At the trial Marian stated that she was unaware of anyone outside the church who heard from anyone in the Collinsville Church of Christ about the withdrawal of fellowship or the reasons for the action.¹²

In the media coverage that later surrounded the

trial the elders of the Collinsville Church of Christ were pictured as harassing Marian Guinn and being very harsh and unkind in their treatment of her. The facts revealed in the trial, however, make it clear that the elders went to Marian privately to discuss this matter on only three occasions. She admitted that they treated her with kindness on all three occasions. After these efforts had failed, they wrote one letter to her and finally announced to the members that they must have no further association with Marian Guinn; and with the Bible references they gave it was clear that the withdrawal of fellowship was because of her fornication.

Previous comments in *Mission* have focused on the question of a member's right to withdraw membership from a congregation. Statements made by the Collinsville elders during the trial were unfortunate in that they confused the issues of membership in the family of God with membership in a local congregation. But regardless of what those elders said, what they actually did in no way denied Marian Guinn's right to resign her membership. What they did was simply to affirm their right and their duty to explain to the members of the congregation why they must have no further association with Marian Guinn.

Regardless of how the Collinsville elders explained their action, what they actually did was directed totally at those who remained as members of the Collinsville Church of Christ and not at Marian

In the view of the elders Marian Guinn did not cease being a Christian when she resigned her membership in the Collinsville Church of Christ. They regarded her as being in error, but they still regarded her as being a sister in the family of God.

Guinn. In order to protect the members of their congregation from the corrupting influence of such a person as Marian Guinn and in order to protect the reputation and influence of the church in their community, they had to instruct their members to have no further association with Marian Guinn. At that point, such action could not have been a punishment of Marian Guinn—but only a protection of the members and of the congregation's influence in the community. *Marian Guinn told the elders that she wanted to be left alone. That is exactly what the elders told the members to do.* What was withdrawn here was not fellowship at church services because Marian had stopped attending and had resigned her membership in the congregation. What was withdrawn was personal and social contact. Marian still had friends and relatives in the congregation.

The elders felt that they had to tell these Christians, for their own protection and for the sake of the congregation's influence in the community, to stop associating with Marian Guinn. The message was not addressed to Marian Guinn. It was addressed totally to the members of the congregation and simply explained what they were to do in this matter.

The Trial

Marian Guinn sued the Collinsville Church of Christ for defamation. She later amended her petition by dropping the defamation claim since the facts stated by the elders were true and thus there was no defamation. She then claimed actual and punitive damages for invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

The Collinsville Church of Christ challenged the court's jurisdiction on First Amendment grounds. The trial court, however, exercised jurisdiction in spite of this objection. In so doing, the court ruled that it had jurisdiction to determine the propriety of forms of religious belief and discipline—the First Amendment notwithstanding.

The case for Marian Guinn attacked religious doctrines and practices of the Collinsville Church of Christ in several significant ways. The charge of intentional infliction of emotional distress related to the statement the elders made when they told Marian that if she did not repent, they would have to explain to the members why they must have no further association with her. Marian's attorney called that "emotional blackmail." He said that no church should be permitted to make such a statement to its members. The case against the Collinsville Church of Christ also charged invasion of privacy by intrusion upon seclusion and by publication of private facts. The charge of intrusion upon seclusion related to the three times that the elders went to see Marian privately to ask her about the rumors, to confront her with the evidence, and to admonish her to repent. Mrs. Guinn's attorney claimed that those elders had no right to talk to Marian about her private sex life—or to talk to any other member about such a personal matter. The case presented against the Collinsville Church of Christ would allow church leaders to engage in passive counseling, i.e., talking to members about personal problems if the members come to the elders and ask for their advice. Active counseling, however, would be ruled out by the argument presented against the Collinsville elders. According to this argument, church leaders do not have the right to go to a member who has violated the congregation's moral code to urge that member to repent. Marian's attorney also attacked the strict moral code of the Col-

linsville Church of Christ that defined sexual intercourse between single people as being immoral. He said, "Those two people were single and this is America." He urged that in America today sexual intercourse between single people is not regarded as being immoral. Thus he objected to the moral code of the Church of Christ, to its doctrine concerning the active counseling role of its elders, and to its doctrine requiring a withdrawal of fellowship from a member who sins and refuses to repent.

The charge of invasion of privacy by publication of private facts was the only charge that had anything at all to do with any action taken by the elders after Marian wrote a letter resigning her membership in the congregation. This charge related to the statement the elders made when they explained to the congregation why they must have no further association with Marian Guinn. The attorney for the Collinsville Church of Christ argued that there was no publication of private facts. He urged that the facts concerning the fornication were made public by the actions of Marian Guinn and Pat Sharp, by the statement Pat Sharp made to one of the elders, and then by the lawsuit initiated by Marian Guinn—not by the statement the elders made to the congregation. He further argued that a statement from the elders to the members of the congregation on this matter came under the heading of "qualified privilege" as defined in the related laws on libel and slander. The judge, however, refused to include in his instructions to the jury anything pertaining to qualified privilege.

Marian Guinn's attorney attacked the beliefs of the Collinsville Church of Christ on one remaining point: the issue of whether the church should regard a member who resigns membership in the congregation as being a former member and still a Christian or a non-member to be treated like a non-Christian.

One of the principal issues in the trial was the conduct of the elders of the Collinsville Church of Christ after Marian Guinn withdrew her membership from the congregation. The record shows, however, that after Marian withdrew her membership from the congregation, the elders never went to see her again. They wrote her one letter, but they did not talk to her again. They simply explained to the congregation why they must have no further association with her.

The instructions the judge gave to the jury left little doubt as to the outcome. He allowed the jury to

consider all the issues raised in Marian Guinn's case, including: (1) the objections to the strict moral code of the Church of Christ that regards sexual intercourse between single people as being immoral; (2) the objection to the doctrine of the Church of Christ concerning the active counseling role of its elders; (3) the discipline practiced by Churches of Christ in withdrawing fellowship from a member who sins and refuses to repent; and, (4) the doctrine of the Church of Christ that regards a person who withdraws membership from a congregation as being a member in rebellion and thus still a child in the family of God rather than as being a non-member.

Marian Guinn sued for \$1,300,000 in actual and punitive damages. The jury awarded her both actual and punitive damages on all charges. The judge had told the jury, however, that only the largest of the awards would be granted. The largest of the awards by the jury for actual and punitive damages was for \$390,000. The decision of the jury against the Collinsville Church of Christ was unanimous. The jury actually had little choice, based on the instructions given to them by the judge.

The Collinsville Church of Christ and its elders have appealed the decision by the trial court in Tulsa. The appeal should be considered by the Oklahoma Supreme Court—perhaps some time in 1986. The appeal is based on several constitutional issues that will be discussed in Part 2 and Part 3, in subsequent issues of *Mission*.

NOTES

Citations to the trial transcript are given in these notes as T. page/line and are as they appear in the appeal, No. 62,154, in the Supreme Court of the State of Oklahoma, *The Church of Christ of Collinsville, Oklahoma, a non-profit corporation; Allan Cash, Ted Moody, and Ron Whitten, Appellants, vs. Marian Guinn, Appellee*, an appeal from the District Court of Tulsa County, Oklahoma, Honorable Tony Graham, Judge, with the Collinsville Church of Christ and its elders represented by Deryl L. Gotcher, Roy C. Breedlove, and Graydon Dean Luthey, Jr.

¹T. 237/20; 58/22; 59/17; 59/21; 238/12; 107/17; 110/13; 110/20; 239/2-25; 238/12; 113/11; 115/18-20; 238/12-240/15; 272/1; 114/22. ²T. 272/6; 65/12; 271/14. ³T. 21/12; 126/4; 124/25; 138/6. ⁴T. 165/7. ⁵T. 147/15; 147/11; 167/24; 168/15; 168/25-169/13; 147/22-24. ⁶T. 227/4. ⁷T. 137/5-11. ⁸T. 173/6. ⁹T. 287/8-24. ¹⁰T. 291/2-3; 292/1-4. ¹¹T. 344/25; 346/8; 345/3; 294/5-295/24. ¹²T. 171/4-172/24.

MISSION

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MISSION

and the Church



Changing Winds: Hymnals And "Other" Christians

By ROBERT M. RANDOLPH

Two things happened at this year's ACU Lectureship that give some insight into where the non-instrumental Churches of Christ are going. The first happening of note was the introduction of a new hymnal, *GREAT SONGS OF THE CHURCH*, Revised. This book is the result of a number of years of hard work by Forrest McCann and Jack Boyd of the ACU faculty. They utilized a committee drawn from churches across the nation. The result is a book they can be proud of and that the church can use well into the next century.

There are some major changes in this hymnal. Shaped notes are gone and many who learned to sing using this method will miss them. Gone too are many of the gospel songs which came out of the culture of the South and Southwest. This is a hymnal for the contemporary church. There are hymns from every century and rural imagery is decidedly diminished.

We have already adopted the hymnal here at the Brookline Church. I liked the response of one of our older members when we first used it. She was excited, she said, because there were so many new songs to learn. The best argument we have for acapella singing is its beauty and its ability to draw on the gifts of the whole church. Unfortunately we do not often sing well. This new hymnal can help give new life to our worship. A worship service that uplifts and draws together a community can send them forth into the world with a greater sense of purpose and direction.

The second event of note was Bill Humble's lecture on the topic "In Quest of Unity." For the first time in recent memory there was a recognition that those in Churches of Christ are not the only Chris-

tians. Bill reminded his audience that "There are a million people, then, who are not part of 'our brotherhood', but they are part of the body of Christ." He spoke here of the Churches of Christ/Christian Churches, but his other examples opened the doors of the kingdom even wider.

The tone of the Lectureship this year was noticeably upbeat and the spirit of Humble's remarks was evident elsewhere in the words of other speakers. It may be that we can finally put to rest that old joke about everyone in heaven having to speak in whispers so the "Church of Christers" can continue to think they are the only ones there.

On another note, but related, was the Conference on Christian Unity held by the University Church of Christ in Conway, Ark. This small effort began three years ago and reminds all of us that there is a hunger in our churches for a broader understanding of what it means to be a non-denominational Christian. I have read the speeches of the conference and was especially impressed by Bob Cannon's report on his pilgrimage into the Assemblies of God. His story is told without bitterness and with a sense of humor. We have some things to learn from him.

Finally, I suspect the readers of *Mission* will find much of the current conversation about Christian unity predictable, but welcome. After all *Mission* has been saying these things for nearly two decades and they reflect the loftiest intent of those who began the Restoration Movement. I think, however, it is crucial to our well being as individuals and communities of faith that we recognize and give thanks for change. In doing so we can come face to face with God at work and it is invigorating to be reminded that we have not been left alone. _____MISSION

BOOKS

The Bible And Popular Culture In America

Edited by Allene Stuart Phy. Philadelphia: Fortress Press; Chico, California; Scholars Press, 1985, 248 pp., \$15.95.

Reviewed by Edwin S. Gleaves

*From Grand Ole Opry
To Traveling Bible Salesman
To The Electronic Church*

REVIEWED BY EDWIN S. GLEAVES

The Bible has permeated American popular culture in innumerable ways, from the songs on the Grand Ole Opry to children's books of Bible stories. But with the coming of television the influence that the Bible has on the present generation is probably less direct than before, reaching many Americans through the filter of popular culture.

Such paradoxes as these are addressed in this original collection of essays dealing with the impact of the Bible on popular culture. The subject should have universal appeal, for no part of American life remains untouched by the heritage of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures.

The backgrounds and faiths of the contributors differ widely, giving this work a welcome variety of viewpoints—although all of the contributors are southerners either by birth or choice. The editor, now at Alabama State University, formerly taught at Peabody College; G. Frank Burns is a Peabody product now teaching English at Tennessee Tech; Perry C. Cotham has both taught at David Lipscomb College and preached at a local congregation in Nashville; Ralph W. Hyde, now retired, taught English and folklore for many years at Middle Tennessee State University;

Ljubica D. Popovich is Associate Professor of Fine Arts at Vanderbilt; and Charles Wolfe is an MTSU faculty member widely known for his work on country and western music. Also, Walter Harrelson, Distinguished Professor of Old Testament in the Vanderbilt Divinity School, is one of the editors of the series of which this volume is a part: *The Bible in American Culture*.

Phy opens the book with a lively disquisition on "The Bible and American Popular Culture," invoking names ranging from Pat Boone to John Dylan, from Rex Humbard to Tony and Susan Alamo, from *The King of Kings* to *Jesus Christ Superstar*. She points out what may be too obvious to notice: that "religious language even permeates what passes for secular culture On the Grand Ole Opry it is often difficult to separate the sacred selections from [other songs], so full are they all with Bible echoes."

Phy contributes two other substantial chapters to this collection: "Retelling the Greatest Story Ever Told: Jesus in Popular Fiction," which recalls such disparate images of Christ as the martyred idealist, the psychotherapist, and the positive thinker; and "The Bible as Literature for American Children," a bibliographical roadmap through the best and the worst of Bible stories and other books that draw their inspiration from the Old and the New Testament.

Burns writes on "The Bible in American Popular Humor" (not all of it in good taste), an area not often explored by serious scholars. "There is

much joy in the King James Version of the Bible," he notes, "but little laughter." Another new angle that deserves more attention than it has received is "The Electronic Church," which Cotham rightly calls "the second great invention [after the printing press] to shape religious attitudes and behavior." His analysis of the television evangelists is astute, perceptive, and fair to the point of bordering on generous.

"My Mother's Bible" is just one of hundreds of Bible-based country songs discussed in Wolfe's "Bible Country: The Good Book in Country Music." Wolfe clearly and cleanly defines the types of Bible songs that have made their impact on country and western music, reaching their heyday during 1945-1955 and then giving way to more worldly concerns. Those who remember the documentary film *Salesman* or who know about the Southwestern Company in Nashville will not be surprised by Hyde's "The Traveling Bible Salesman: The Good Buck from the Good Book." Hyde's method differs from his colleagues in that he bases his findings on first-hand interviews with the salespersons themselves. Popovich concludes the volume with a scholarly but readable study of American popular religious art in "Popular American Biblical Imagery: Sources and Manifestations."

Each article in this collection, regardless of its methodology, is enriched by notes and lists of works consulted. More importantly, each is written for the same audience that made this collection possible in the first place: the American reading public.

Edwin S. Gleaves is Chair of the Department of Library Science and Information Science, Peabody College, Vanderbilt University.

MISSION

CONFINEMENT

By BO WHITAKER

At first the sudden sound of hundreds of yelling men scares me, a fear-frozen reminder that too many times have I heard similar screaming. The war in the Pacific and the riot of '68 have taught me the terrible cries of attack, fear, and panic.

Then I recognize the noise as celebration—the Super Bowl. I imagine the throng of inmates clustered around the television in the smoky day rooms. They care who wins. I don't anymore; yet I instantly treasure their shout of triumph because it doesn't belong in prison. Still, does mass joy sound that much like terror, or has this place taught me to think so?

The question causes me to consider the immediate effects of my environment. This barn where I work, even some Sundays, has become my home, instead of the cell where I have slept for eleven years. Here among mountains of feed sacks and eight-inch rats I work long hours, loading, unloading, and accounting a safe two hundred yards away from the unit. Let them call this place a rat house; it still provides my simple, sustaining pleasures. Since I work hard, my captain allows me to keep my improvised hot plate on which I cook fat pigeons. And daily I run several lengths inside the barn to keep in shape, trying to avoid the classic potbellied profile of old long-timers. Mostly, though, I call the grain barn home because it gives me a tolerable kind of isolation. I crave solitude. A sixty-two-year-old lifer needs privacy, but I fear losing too much contact, with real people, especially myself. Because if my parole comes through —

The survival skills prison has forced me to learn cause me to wonder if I could adjust to the outside. For one thing, I can escape in my head. The free world might think me crazy, but I can borrow a map and plan a detailed trip from town to town. Then, with a powerful concentration born of boredom, loneliness, and confinement I imagine myself traveling. Fantasy becomes alive. I am there. My mind has spared me from countless hours of reality by transporting me to the enchanting Arkansas river bottoms of my childhood. That trick won't earn me

much on the outside, though.

Also, I understand people too well. Prison makes psychologists of all its occupants, stripping personhood to its core and revealing human beings as remarkably adaptive creatures seeking their private pleasures—intelligent animals. Since I know what lies deepest in the human heart, I could not successfully play those outside games again which involve trust and loyalty. My talent, the comprehension of human behavior, allows me to spot phoniness quickly—in everyone I meet. I'd rather not know so much.

Certain people outside the bars have also molded my life. My father, the perfect one. He told me he loved me many times, but even as a child I knew his words were spoken for his own benefit. He had the guts to say anything to anyone; yet he didn't even pretend to love my mother. Daddy died rich, correct, and alone.

My sister visited me in prison once years ago, but the experience made her uncomfortable, gave her a "funny feeling." She explained in a letter that she could no longer visit because she was too sensitive and awfully busy. I don't blame her. To my sister I am a funny feeling.

Most of my school teachers must have helped me to learn. I know the fundamentals and love to read. I hated school, though, since it seemed always to want me to change into someone else, as the army did. And the teacher who stands out in my mind told me in the sixth grade, "I'm not going to whip you, but maybe you'll get what you deserve someday." Prophetess or witch?

I remember the preacher back home too. I liked him for talking too much; I enjoyed listening to the things he didn't know he said. Also, he had no fear of surprises like most preachers do, so he liked me because I surprised him. What a shame we don't allow preachers to have friends! He would get close to nobody and had to live in his own icy world of words and guilt. Knowing him was like trying to shoot a moving target, as he zig-zagged toward Heaven—fun at first, but hard to follow.

Except for myself, I understand the people who sent me here. My last day in the courtroom froze some characters in my memory. Instead of looking

Bo Whitaker, of Abilene, Texas, teaches junior high school English. This story comes from his experience in prison ministry.

in my eyes when he sentenced me to life, the judge busily shuffled papers on his desk and spoke like a robot. My attorney, a court-appointed rookie who must not have looked at my file before the trial, politely thanked the judge and the D.A. The judge graciously acknowledged and then shattered with his gavel a tension they all felt. I wasn't the only guilty party who walked out of the courthouse that day, but only I wore handcuffs.

Now most of the men who guard me here watch too much television at home and enjoy wearing pistols for a living. Riding their gravy trains through the units, the prison administrators never stop and step down long enough to focus. And I have a governor, whose zeal to punish offenders destroys the possibility that the small percentage of prisoners who could be rehabilitated will ever get a chance.

A social worker helped me once, probably tried harder than anyone ever has. Then, when I stood straight, strong enough to do some helping myself, I discovered that the social worker now despised my strength. He could only relate to people he viewed as inferiors.

Several times I have corresponded from prison with people in churches who get a thrill of piety from the exchange. Subconsciously they enjoy rubbing up to my reputation for evil and applying simple answers. Then, too, knowing a convict makes good conservation.

Hundreds of people and events have floated through my sixty-two years. I can interpret them ac-

curately—but *not myself*. From my seat on a feed-sack in a cold barn, listening to other prisoners cheering at the televisions, I summarize. Hating the people who hurt me seems impossible since I understand: all the vices I recognize in other hearts live also in mine. But how can I love either, knowing what I know? People have blessed me but never when they knew it. My brother cried when I broke my arm. An old girlfriend sends me Christmas cards. One time a little girl wanted to share peanuts with me at a ball game. A favorite uncle took me fishing with his boys. Mother cooked me breakfast every morning. My wife loved me for a while. I remember special things, just not special enough.

In ten more minutes the captain will take me back to the unit. I'm not hopeless like some of those guys in there. Not yet, anyway, although I don't have much to lose either—just my dreams. Even though I no longer fear death, I don't want to die. I fear dying without the answer to me. Some strange eternal spark still burns in me, and I know that neither prison nor death represent the ultimate evil.

Maybe prison has made me crazy after all, because what I want seems unreasonable, involving confidence, friendship, and devotion—things I know little about. I appreciate friendship and have always stumbled around its fringes. Sounds peculiar, but I want someone to love me till it hurts, erasing my wretchedness, so that I can start learning again how to be a friend and how to find my God.

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Wrestling With God

A New Film About The Beginnings Of The Stone-Campbell Movement

Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone on Broadway? Not exactly—but *Wrestling With God* is a one-hour dramatic film script conceived, written, produced, and acted by Hollywood professionals, most of whom are also members of the North Hollywood Christian Church. Alexander Campbell will be played by David Haskell, who played John the Baptist in *Godspell*.

The film was the brainchild of actress Jeanne Lange, also an original New York cast member of the *Godspell* and producer of the film. She and co-authors Carol Leigh and Toni Wilkes are first-generation Disciples, having discovered the church as young adults. Concerned that so few members, including ministers, could share "what we are," that spiritual fervor seemed to be waning, and that "our members are not given 'living links' nor educated in such a way as to bind them emotionally to the wonderful message and purpose of the Stone-Campbell movement," they felt the need to "re-ignite the brushfire of spirit that exemplified the beginnings of our movement."

Further they want the "unchurched" to know that there is a place in "organized Christianity" for those who are spiritual seekers and questioners, that there is strength in a community of people with diverse opinions, and that "our polar star of unity" can give purpose and direction. Not least of all, these talented people want to make a difference by using their God-given talents and business skills in service to the church, to God, and to the world.

Through their own hours of study and research and with expert consultation from noted church historians Ronald Osborn and Lester McAllister, among others, they have created a fast-paced and gripping historical drama with fictionalized dialogue but authentic history. It is hoped that *Wrestling With God* will be used as a resource for the three churches (and their educational institutions) whose heritage is the Stone-Campbell (or Restoration) Movement: The Disciples, Churches of Christ, and Christian Churches.

Non-stop production activities will be taking place from June through August. Filming will take place mostly in Kentucky. The film is scheduled to be available for Christmas 1986. For further information, write Jeanne Lange, 3600 Berry Drive, Studio City, CA 91604. MISSION

To Our Readers:

Many of you reported receiving your March and April issues on the same day or receiving April before March. We regret this inconvenience, but we do not know what happened.

So that you will not be apprehensive about your July issue, we are letting you know in advance that in order to save on costs we are combining the July and August issues into one special and enlarged issue.

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